DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 374 SO 017 318

AUTHOR Martin, Oneida L.
TITLE Now That I Am Graduating: Some High School Students' Perceptions of Themselves and Schooling Experiences.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Biloxi, MS, November 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; High Schools; *High School Students; *Self Actualization; *Student Attitudes; *Student Educational Objectives; *Student Experience; *Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

Students are infrequently given an opportunity to share their views about themselves and schools. In an earlier study conducted by Fleischmann (1973), two-thirds of the 1,000 surveyed high school students said they did not enjoy school. Some other students focused on attitudes toward teachers. This study surveyed 54 graduating seniors who were enrolled in English and math college-bound classes to assess their attitudes about themselves and schooling experiences. The study findings revealed that most of the students felt they learned more at the high school level, because they were more mature and serious. They also felt more motivated by high school teachers (48%), primarily due to these teachers' willingness to help them (57%). Other findings reflected that 72% viewed postsecondary education important. The study findings do not attempt to generalize all high school students' perceptions about themselves and schooling experiences. Yet, several conclusions are suggested from the study. The students valued education and learning more as they began to realize their importance on their lives. Is this to say that students learn when they are ready, and when they view learning as important? (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED271374

NOW THAT I AM GRADUATING: SOME HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

Oneida L. Martin
McKenzie College

SO 017 318

*Presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Meeting
Biloxi, MS, November, 1985

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
ONEIDA L. MARTIN
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ABSTRACT

Students are infrequently given an opportunity to share their views about themselves and schools. In an earlier study conducted by Fleischumann (1973), two-thirds of the 1,000 surveyed high school students said they didn't enjoy school. Some other students focused on attitudes toward teachers.

This study surveyed 54 graduating seniors who were enrolled in English and math college-bound classes to assess their attitudes about themselves and schooling experiences.

The study findings revealed that most of the students felt they learned more at the high school level, because they were more mature and serious. They also felt more motivated by high school teachers (48%), primarily due to these teachers' willingness to help them (57%). Other findings reflected that 72% viewed postsecondary education important.

The study findings do not attempt to generalize all high school students' perceptions about themselves and schooling experiences. Yet, several conclusions are suggested from the study. The students valued education and learning more as they began to realize their importance on their lives. Is this to say that students learn when they are ready, and when they view learning as important?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in the '80s has become a national concern. Purportedly, deflated achievement scores during the late '70s signaled a future academic disaster and education deterioration for public schools. The quality of education in our society has generated concern and support from the community. Public demands for education reforms with schools, teachers, students, and curriculum programs have stimulated a restoration period of education excellence.

To improve the quality of education, steps have been taken to combat the academic deficiency. As students continue to do poorly on achievement tests, lack basic skills upon graduating from high school, and enter college academically unprepared, high school graduation requirements have increased from what it was a decade ago. More units of math and science have been added to the curricula, while still requiring students to pass a proficiency test to receive a diploma (Goldberg & Harvey, 1983). Furthermore, much emphasis has been placed on developing and maintaining effective schools, teachers, and teaching to foster academic growth in learning environments. Several studies have been conducted to describe what happens to students in schools and classrooms (Goodlad, 1983; Tyler, 1983). Some important educational factors that lend to students' learning are the type of environment in which they are placed, effective teaching behaviors, classroom interactions, time on tasks, homework, parental and home influences, and teacher motivation. In Goodlad's Study of Schooling (1983), the most vital resource (students) in education was frequently overlooked by teachers. Goodlad observed that students were very seldom afforded the opportunities to engage in activities that would enhance their thinking ability or foster creativity. In the Decade Study of eleventh graders, Sevener (1983) noted that students' attitude was a vital factor in what they did at school and in the classroom. How students

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

viewed their subjects, as well as their school, was linked to achievement.

For the last 16 years, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. has conducted a gallup poll every year to ascertain public views on issues, trends, and concerns surrounding public education. Some past findings from the polls have shown that public schools and teachers generally receive low ratings. Conversely, the current findings showed an upward trend in the public ratings (Phi Delta Kappan, September, 1984). For the first time, teachers were also given an opportunity to share their views about public schools (October, 1984).

However, students are infrequently given an opportunity to share their views about themselves and schools. In an earlier study conducted by Fleischumann (1973), two-thirds of the 1,000 surveyed high school students said they did not enjoy school. Some of the cited reasons focused on attitudes toward teachers. Most felt teachers had no interest in them, because they were not taught much. Findings from another study conducted later by Wagenar (1981) revealed how high school seniors viewed themselves and their schools. The students expressed dissatisfaction with teachers and teaching. Teachers were also the primary concern to students in a survey study reported by U. S. News & World Report, 1984. Students felt that teachers failed to make subjects interesting to them, but blamed themselves for not caring about education. Duke (1985) has asserted that educational excellence cannot be effectively promoted or measured unless students are involved in the promotion. If students are given the opportunities to express their attitudes and share their schooling experiences, the pursuit of excellence will have more value to them.

II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study investigated how high school seniors felt about themselves and schooling experiences. The study addressed six questions:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1. What do the seniors plan to do after high school?
2. What are the students' present and future goals?
3. What are the students' attitudes about school and education?
4. Do the students value classroom learning?
5. What school years did students enjoy?
6. Which school years did students do their best work?

IIII. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from 54 high school seniors who were enrolled in English and math college-bound classes at a two-year college during Spring, 1984. The program was an experimental project to afford interested seniors an opportunity to advance academically and receive college exposure and credit. A majority of the sample were female (N = 38) and white (N = 28) students. The type of high school they attended varied. The majority of the sample (52%) attended an urban high school, 32% attended a rural school; suburban (14%), and private (2%). Fifty percent had a B scholastic average, and 50% had a C scholastic average. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample group. The alternative responses, as well as an "other" category, while 2 of the questions were open. Most of the data were analyzed using chi-square measurements; other parts of the data were examined for possible relationships using Pearson r. The level of significance was set at the .05 level.

IV. DATA RESULTS

Descriptive data revealed that most of the sample group came from families with at least 2-4 children (69%) in the family. Sixteen percent was was an only child; 12% of the households had 5-7 children in the family, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3% had more than 7 children in households. Forty-eight percent of the families did not have any children attending college; 39% had at least one child in college, and 13% had two children in college.

The socioeconomical levels of the families tended to reflect the education and occupations of the parents. A large percentage of the family incomes were under $10,000 (37%) and between $10,000-15,000 (31%). However, 16 percent of the families had incomes between $15,000-20,000 and over $20,000. Some of the low incomes could have been attributed to mothers who were housewives (35%). The mothers tended to have more white-collar jobs (28%) than the fathers (26%). The findings also showed that 35 percent of the respondents failed to cite the father's occupation, compared to the 9 percent who failed to give the mother's. Data results also revealed that the mothers had obtained more education than fathers. Comparatively, more of the mothers had some college experiences (35%), or were college graduates (8%) than fathers who had some college (20%) or college graduates (6%). However, some of the fathers (8%) had a master degree.

Although a majority of the parents did not pursue postsecondary education, most of the respondents (73%) planned to attend college after high school graduation. Other graduation plans included work, marriage, military, and travel. These postsecondary plans were primarily influenced by parents and self. The influential responses showed a significant difference, X^2 (2) = 34.43, $p < .001$. Pearson r yielded a .59 (r^2 = .35) relationship with postsecondary plans and influences with plans.

Some findings from the study highlighted some of the students' values. Table I presents what the students viewed as important to them. Their primary and secondary interests were school (46%) and employment (42%). Other present values and interests were followed by a car, apartment, and entertainment. Comparatively, Table II shows how the values and interests tended to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table II

5-Year Future Goal Values Of Graduating Seniors

Goal Values	Rank	Frequency	$\bar{X}$	SD
Career/Income	1, 2	28, 16	2.02	1.46
Apartment	3	22	2.86	1.11
Automobile	4	22	3.84	1.08
Entertainment/ Leisure	5	22	4.62	1.33
School	6	19	4.18	1.80

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table II

5-Year Future Goal Values Of Graduating Seniors

Goal Values	Rank	Frequency	$\bar{X}$	SD
Career/Income	1, 2	28, 16	2.02	1.46
Apartment	3	22	2.86	1.11
Automobile	4	22	3.84	1.08
Entertainment/ Leisure	5	22	4.62	1.33
School	6	19	4.18	1.80

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

change as the students thought about their goals in five years. School would no longer be primary or secondary; career/income and marriage would possibly be important. An apartment/house, car, and entertainment would follow. School was viewed as having very little importance in five years.

The respondents' views on schooling experiences were generally the same. For example, 72 percent felt that learning for them took place primarily in high school. Some of the reasons cited were maturity, seriousness, interests, fewer activities. In addition, parental and teacher expectations and control were cited. The students also felt that prior to high school, they were not selfmotivated. Better teachers and their influence, assistance, and guidance fostered classroom learning. In fact, the respondents (48%) said teachers motivated them more at the high level than at the elementary and junior high levels, X^2 (2) = 6.89, $p < .30$.

High school years were very important to the respondents, because academic growth was enhanced. As a result, the students did their best work. Pearson r yielded a .84 (r^2=.71). There was not a statistical significant difference between students' responses and high school years with the classroom learning and achievement, motivation, and teacher influence, X^2 (6)= 8.96, $p > .10$.

Of all the twelve years of classroom learning experiences, students have had, 40 percent of the respondents will always remember 3 to 5 teachers who were sensitive to their personal, social, academic, and emotional needs. Twenty-five percent will remember 2 to 4. Overall, most of the seniors looked forward to graduating form high school. There was no significant difference, X^2 (1)= 2.13, $p > .10$, although 86 percent said they could have made better grades. The students felt that leaving friends (45%) and activities (20%) behind would be more missed than teachers or prinicipals (17%), classes (9%) and other things (9%). The students enjoyed their classes, $X^2(1) = 11.64$, $p < .001$, and they felt that school had prepared them for career goals (74%). They also felt they had confidence to reach their goals in life (82%), but would not succeed if good grades were not made in school. Seventy-two percent viewed postsecondary education as being important in life, while ninety-five percent said it would be valuable within the next 5 years, X^2 (1) = 26.67, $p < .001$.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study findings do not attempt to generalize all high school students' perceptions about themselves and schooling experiences. Yet, several conclusions are suggested from the study. The students in the sample reflected three antecedent motivational factors prior to entering school and classrooms: themselves, parents, and a sister or brother. This suggests that the students valued their parents' decisions, but they also felt matured to make their own decisions. This finding further suggests that parents should continue to show an interest in their child's learning, for they can serve as a motivational factor. Other findings showed that the students valued education and learning more as they began to realize their importance on their lives as young adults about to graduate from high school. Although the sample group felt high school teachers had more influence on their learning than at elementary and junoir high levels, they contributed it to their academic readiness. Is this to say that students learn when they are ready, and when they view learning as important? Peers continue to serve as a support system while in school. Furthermore, students still expect teachers to require more from them. The inference is significant for excellence in education. Teacher expectations seem to be important to students in classroom learning environments. It is not only what teachers do to facilitate learning, but what they expect students to do as well.

Another conclusion from the findings was the students' priorities in life suggest they are aware of the economical problems with inflation and unemployment in our society. Perhaps this awareness will stimulate them to make better grades in college than they did in high school. In conclusion despite the limited scope of the study, the findings suggest that more research is needed at the high school level. An interesting question that has risen from the findings is why students will only remember a few teachers after undergoing twelve years of approximately 2,040 classroom experiences with teachers?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Duke, Daniel. "What Is The Nature of Educational Excellence and Should We Try to Measure It?" Phi Delta Kappan. June, 1985, 66 (10), 671-674.

Fleischmann, Manly. The Fleischmann Report on the Quality, Cost, and Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in New York States. New York: Viking Press, 1973.

Gallup, Alec. "The Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools." Phi Delta Kappan, October, 1984, 66 (2), 97-107.

Gallup, George. "The 16th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools." Phi Delta Kappan. September, 1984, 66 (1), 23-38.

Goodlad, John I. "A Study of Schooling: Some Findings and Hypotheses." Phi Delta Kappan. March, 1983, 64 (7), 465-70.

Goodlad, John I. "A Study of Schooling: Some Implications for School Improvement." Phi Delta Kappan. April, 1983, 64 (8), 552-58.

Goodlad, John I. A Place Called Schools. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.

Sevener, Don. "Students Have Lost Their Thirst For Knowledge." Education Week. August 17, 1983, p. 1.

Tyler, Ralph W. "A Place Called Schools." Phi Delta Kappan. March, 1983, 64 (7), 462-64.

U.S. News & World Report. "Students Think Schools Are Making the Grade." August 27, 1984, p. 49.

Wagenar, Theodore C. "High School Seniors' View of Themselves and Their Schools: A Trend Analysis. Phi Delta Kappan. September, 1981, 63 (1), 29-32.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE